

Message Text

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ACTION EB-07

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FM AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE
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INFO AMCONSUL SURABAYA
AMCONSUL MEDAN
AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
AMEMBASSY CANBERRA
AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR
AMEMBASSY MANILA
AMEMBASSY RANGOON
AMEMBASSY SEOUL
AMEMBASSY TAIPEI
AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON
AMEMBASSY SUVA
AMEMBASSY PORT MORESBY
AMCONSUL BRISBANE
AMCONSUL FUKUOKA
AMCONSUL HONG KONG
AMCONSUL MELBOURNE
AMCONSUL OSAKA KOBE
AMCONSUL PERTH
AMCONSUL SYDNEY
AMCONSUL AUCKLAND

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STATE FOR EB/OCA SACCHET,
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SUBJECT: AGENDA FOR EAST ASIA COMMERCIAL OFFICERS CONFERENCE

1. EMBASSY AND REGIONAL TRADE CENTER PERSONNEL
PLANNING TO ATTEND SUBJECT CONFERENCE LOOK FORWARD TO
OPPORTUNITY TO DISCUSS WITH THEIR FIELD AND WASHINGTON
COLLEAGUES PROBLEMS OF MUTUAL CONCERN AND ALSO TO SEE

HOW WE MIGHT BETTER CATER TO THE NEEDS OF THE AMERICAN BUSINESS COMMUNITY. LATTER THEME IS, OF COURSE, ONE WHICH HAS ENGAGED MUCH TIME AND THOUGHT IN THE PAST AND WILL CONTINUE TO DO SO IN THE FUTURE. HOWEVER, TO BE REALLY MEANGFUL ANY DISCUSSION OF THIS BROAD SUBJECT MUST BE FOCUSED AND STRUCTURED IF OUR DISCUSSIONS ARE TO BE OF VALUE AND IF MEANGFUL CONCLUSIONS ARE TO FLOW FROM OUR CONFERENCE.

2. MORE THAN THREE MONTHS HAVE NOW PASSED SINCE A JOINT STATE/COMMERCE TEAM CAME TO SINGAPORE (AND OTHERS VISITED VARIOUS OTHER FOREIGN SERVICE POSTS) TO EVALUATE THE SYSTEMS WHEREBY COMMERCIAL PROGRAMS ARE DEVELOPED AND COMMERCIAL SERVICES DELIVERED TO THE AMERICAN BUSINESS COMMUNITY. THE FINDINGS OF THIS WORLD-WIDE SURVEY HAVE NOT YET BEEN PROVIDED TO THIS POST AND IT WOULD SEEM THAT ANY CONCLUSIONS OR OBSERVATIONS ARRIVED AT BY THE EVALUATION TEAMS SHOULD BE MADE AVAILABLE TO ADDRESSEES WELL IN ADVANCE OF THE SUBJECT CONFERENCE SO THAT WE MAY HAVE A COMMON POINT OF DEPARTURE FOR OUR DISCUSSIONS. CAREFUL PREPARATION OF THIS AGENDA ITEM IS ESSENTIAL IF THE DIFFUSE, THE OCCASIONALLY CONTENTIOUS, EXCHANGE ON THIS SUBJECT IN PAST CONFERENCES ARE TO BE AVOIDED. WE SUGGEST THAT ONE REPRESENTATIVE EACH OF STATE AND COMMERCE WHO PARTICIPATED IN THE JOINT EVALUATION OF COMMERICAL ACTIVITIES LEAD THE DICUSSION OF THIS AGENDA ITEM.

3. FOREGOING MAJOR AGENDA ITEM WOULD OF COURSE PROVIDE SCOPE FOR MANY OF CONCERNS WHICH CONFRONT US IN THE FIELD: ADEQUACY OF DOMESTIC (U.S.) SUPPORT
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(PORGRAMS, ORGANIZATION AND OPERATIONS) FOR EXPORT EXPANSION, AND CAREER OPPORTUNITIES AND INCENTIVES FOR COMMERICAL OFFICERS. FOR EXAMPLE, AT PAST CONFERENCES, DISCUSSION OF PERSONNEL MATTERS HAS BEEN, AT BEST, LIMITED TO HURRIED CONFABS WITH SOMEONE FROM WASHINGTON PERSONNEL FOR THOSE INDIVIDUALS FACING REASSIGNMENT. BELIEVE A MORE THOROUGH AIRING OF PERSONNEL QUESTIONS IS CALLED FOR AS THIS WOULD GIVE WASHINGTON VALUABLE FEEDBACK BASED ON COMMON EXPERIENCES. SUBTOPICS MIGHT INCLUDE COMMERCIAL OFFICERS' PERCEPTION OF STATUS AND RECOGNITION, PROMOTION AND TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES, AND INCREASINGLY COMMON EXPERIENCE OF WORKING IN INTEGRATED ECONOMIC/ COMMERCIAL/POLITICAL SECTIONS.

4. EMBASSY JAKARTA'S PROPOSAL (JAKARTA 1602) THAT CONSIDERATION BE GIVEN TO IMPROVING SUPPORT FOR FIRMS ALREADY ESTABLISHED IN FOREIGN MARKETS STRIKES US AS A BIT UNUSUAL SINCE EXTENSIVE SUPPORT FOR SUCH

ENTITIES IS ALREADY GENERAL PRACTICE, BOTH BY EMBASSIES AND BY TRADE CENTERS. IT DOES HOWEVER HIGHLIGHT THE PROBLEM WE ALL HAVE OF DECIDING ON HOW WE ALLOCATE OUR SCARCE RESOURCES BETWEEN POTENTIAL CATEGORIES OF CLAIMANTS AND THE INEVITABLE CONSEQUENCE THAT THERE WILL ALWAYS BE SOME WHO ARE DISGRUNTLED.

5. ANOTHER AGENDA ITEM MIGHT BE DEVOTED TO MAJOR PROJECT REPORTING. WOULD APPRECIATE WASHINGTON'S UP-TO DATE VIEWS ON WHAT IS WANTED, HOW IT SHOULD BE REPORTED, AND TO WHOM REPORTED INFORMATION SHOULD BE DISSEMINATED. IN LATTER CONNECTION, WE WISH TO DICUSS SHARING OF SUCH INFORMATION BETWEEN POSTS.

6. IN LIGHT OF IMPORTANCE OF EXPORT FINANCING FOR OUR TRADE PROMOTION EFFORTS, AND POSSIBLE CHANGES IN THIS FIELD UNDER NEW ADMINISTRATION, EMBASSY SECONDS AUCKLAND'S SUGGESTION THAT EXIM BANK BE REPRESENTED AT CONFERENCE.
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7. WITHIN DICUSSION OF TRADE POLICY AGENDA ITEM, WE HOPE ATTENTION CAN BE GIVEN TO QUESTION OF U.S. TRADE WITH INDO-CHINA AND POSSIBILITIES FOR CHANGES IN THIS AREA.

8. WE NOTE INTEREST OF SEVERAL POSTS (FUKUOKA, OSAKA-KOBE AND, POSSIBLY, SEOUL?) IN DISCUSSION OF SATELLITE TRADE CENTERS AND ALSO NOTE JAKARTA'S SUGGESTION REGARDING RUMP SESSION OF ASEAN COUNTRY REPRESENTATIVES TO DISCUSS REGIONAL COOPERATION IN PLANNING AND CARRYING OUT OF COMMERICAL PROGRAMS IN SEA, INCLUDING ROLE OF SINGAPORE REGIONAL TRADE CENTER. WASHINGTON WILL OBVIOUSLY WANT TO DECIDE ON HOW TO HANDLE THESE RELATED BUT SEPARATE ISSUES. FOR OUR PART, HOWEVER, WE BELIEVE A SEPARATE SESSION DEVOTED TO LATTER SUBJECT, ATTENDED BY ASEAN COUNTRY REPRESENTATIVES, SINGAPORE RTC OFFICERS AND APPROPRIATE WASHINGTON OFFICIALS WOULD BE DESIRABLE, PERHAPS AFTER CONCLUSION OF FORMAL CONFERENCE, IN A.M. OF FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 25. AS WASHINGTON AGENCIES ARE AWARE, REGIONAL ROLE OF RTC WAS QUESTIONED BY FOREIGN SERVICE INSPECTORS IN 1975 AND PRESENTLY ENVISAGED MIX OF ON-SITE AND OFF-SITE ACTIVITIES FOR FY 1977 AND FY 1978 DOES NOT STRIKE US AS ALTOGETHER IDEAL. MOREOVER, EMBASSY BELIEVES THAT THERE IS A LACK OF CLARITY, WITH RESULTING DUPLICATION OF EFFORT, CONCERNING SUPPORTIVE ACTIONS WHICH REGIONAL POSTS SHOULD TAKE IN THEIR COUNTRIES ON BEHALF OF ON-SITE RTC EXHIBITS IN SINGAPORE. A THOROUGH DISCUSSION OF THIS SUBJECT, WHICH WE ARE PREPARED TO LEAD, COULD PAY MEANINGFUL DIVIDENDS.

9. BASED ON KNOWLEDGE OF APCAC MEETINGS AND PREVIOUS APCAC/USG EXCHANGES, WE DOUBT THAT MUCH WILL COME OF ANY APCAC PARTICIPATION (STATE 304401, MANILA 19596) IN SCHEDULED COMMERCIAL OFFICERS MEETING. WE AGREE, HOWEVER, THAT APCAC IS ENTITLED TO A HEARING AND RECOMMEND THAT UNCLASSIFIED

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PROPOSED APCAC SESSION BE ALLOTTED SUFFICIENT TIME. WE HAVE HEARD GRUMBLINGS THAT AUDIENCE APCAC WAS GRANTED AT JANUARY 1976 CHIEFS OF MISSION CONFERENCE IN HONOLULU WAS PERFUNCTORY AND DID NOT PERMIT MEANFUL EXCHANGE. CONSEQUENTLY, WE SHOULD DO OUR BEST TO AVOID GIVING APCAC ANY REASON TO FEEL SLIGHTED AGAIN AND SUGGEST THAT FORMAL SESSION WITH APCAC BE FOLLOWED BY A NO-HOST LUNCHEON AT WHICH APCAC REPRESENTATIVES AND CONFERENCE PARTICIPANTS COULD CONTINUE TO DISCUSS ISSUES OF MUTUAL CONCERN.

10. FINALLY, IF THE EMBASSY MAY BE PERMITTED A MUTED BLEAT, WE ARE DISMAYED BY THE GENERAL THRUST OF PARAGRAPH 2 OF STATE 301183. WITH MOST POSTS LONG HAVING AND INTEGRATED ECONOMIC/COMMERICAL SECTIONS, AND AMBASSADORS AND DCMS BEING AWARE OF THE ECONOMIC/COMMERCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS AND VICE VERSA, THE REFERENCE TO OFFICERS HAVING "PURELY ECONOMIC CONCERNS" STRIKES US AS BEING ARCHAIC.
HOLDRIDGE

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